# The Maryland Yellowthroat

*Newsletter of the Maryland Ornithological Society*

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2004 VOL. 24, NO. 1


## President's Corner

### American Bird Conservancy: Increasing Birders' Clout

**by Paul Zucker**

As a member of the American Bird Conservancy (ABC), MOS is invited to send representatives to the policy council meetings. On November 13, I attended such a meeting. About 60 people attended, representing federal agencies (Fish and Wildlife, Forestry), environmental groups (National Audubon, local birding societies, Defenders of Wildlife, Peregrine Fund), umbrella organizations (North American Bird Conservation Initiative), and an assortment of others (including Ducks Unlimited, Association of Avian Veterinarians, Humane Society, Boreal Forest Initiative).

As originally conceived, the policy council would vote on positions for the organization to endorse. With such a large and diverse group, there were sometimes dissenters. As a result, there has been a tendency to ask member organizations to endorse those specific issues they support. In the last year MOS (upon the recommendation of the Conservation Committee) has signed on to a number of these, including comments about Mute Swans, Wind Turbine Siting, and the killing of Cormorants.

Now, the ABC is entertaining an exciting new proposal to create a new and broader group called the Bird Conservation Alliance. It would reach out to an even larger community, using such tools as websites, listservers, and resource databases, to identify potential new members. Eventually the Alliance would merge with the ABC's Policy Council (once appropriate by-laws are

*(President's Corner continues on page 2)*

### *Inside this Issue:*


President's Corner . . . . . 1
MOS Conference 2004 . . . . . 1
Maryland Birdlife CD-ROM . . . . . 1
DNR Reports . . . . . 2
Atlas: Miniroutes . . . . . 3
Conservation Connection . . . . . 4
Baltimore Sun: Birding . . . . . 5
Chapter Chatter . . . . . 6
Birds of Note . . . . . 8
Help Wanted: EFM . . . . . 8
The Big Sit: Maryland Style . . . . . 9
MOS Calendar . . . . . 10
Telling Tales . . . . . 10
Book Review . . . . . 16
Last Call . . . . . 16


## Conference 2004

### June 11–13 • Washington College, Chestertown

**Clay and Pat Sutton,** celebrated naturalists, conservationists, and authors from Cape May, NJ, will headline the annual MOS conference at Washington College in Chestertown, Kent Co. The Conference will take place June 11-13, Friday-Sunday.

Clay, a freelance writer and co-author of *Hawks in Flight* (with Pete Dunne, illustrated by David Sibley) and *North American Birds of Prey* (with Richard Walton), will give the keynote talk Friday night, "How to Spot an Owl." He and Pat co-authored a book by that name which has received much acclaim.

Another of the Suttons' books is *How to Spot Butterflies*. On Saturday morning, Pat will present a butterfly identification seminar, and following the seminar Pat and Clay will lead a butterfly field trip.

Washington College, a beautiful setting, is close to many interesting birding sites. Accommodations will be dorm suites similar to those at the Salisbury Conference of 2001. The college kitchen, noted for its quality, will provide the meals.

*As usual, we will have a Silent Auction and Raffle. Anyone with donations should contact **Maryanne Dolan**, 202-483-8188 or abtrowbridge@msn.com.

***Dale Johnson** again this year is handling the Artist's Exhibit. Dale would appreciate any suggestions of local or Maryland artists; contact her at 410-867-7743 or ckadj@juno.com.

***Walter Ellison** is looking for field trip leaders. Contact Walter, 410-778-9568 or rossgull@crosslink.net, if you can help. (This year Walter will take us out Friday evening to look for Whip-poor-wills.)

It looks like it's going to be a great conference. I hope to see many of you there. If you have questions or suggestions or wish to volunteer, please contact me.

**Janet Shields**
301-416-7109
janetbill@prodigy.net

## BUILD YOUR CD-ROM COLLECTION

Once upon a time, there were more Passenger Pigeons in Maryland than House Finches. Read about it in the archives of *Maryland Birdlife*! All issues from 1945 through 1999 are now available on a searchable CD-ROM compatible with both PCs and Macs. MOS member price: $2.00 + S/H ($0.60 for one CD; larger orders please inquire). Contact **John Malcolm,** smudgie@comcast.net, 301-977-5788.

President's Corner *(continued from page 1)*

approved). Member organizations would be able to sign on in support of the issues they favor. A new staff person, Alicia Craig, has been hired to organize this activity.

To me this development represents another step in the rapid growth of the ABC and the resulting increase in the clout of the bird conservation community. In this time of so many attacks on our environmental protections, the need to increase the level of organization and cooperation in our community is all the greater. ABC's Vice President for Policy, Gerald Winegrad (a member of our Anne Arundel chapter, by the way) continues to provide energetic leadership on the policy issues.

The remainder of the meeting was given over to informative presentations on such subjects as the threat to Cerulean Warblers from mountaintop strip mines, the Boreal Songbird Initiative, recovery efforts for prairie-chickens and for condors, updates on wind energy issues, and the problems of dealing with feral cats.

I encourage all of you to learn more about the ABC and its activities by viewing its website, www.abcbirds.org. From this website you can download past issues of their information-packed periodical, "Bird Calls."

**The Maryland Yellowthroat**
**Newsletter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, Inc.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Editor: | Lydia Schindler<br>paulydia@erols.com<br>301-977-5252 |
| Layout: | Suzanne Probst<br>sprobst@comcast.net<br>410-992-3489 |
| Calendar Editor: | Candi Lee<br>Cleerlee@comcast.net<br>410-287-0415 |
| Mailing list: | Bill Guion<br>bguion@comcast.net<br>301-490-0444 |
| MOS website: | http://www.mdbirds.org |
| Webmaster: | Frances C. Saunders<br>fcsaunders@att.net |

*Anyone is welcome to contribute articles or ideas that you think will be of interest to other birders. Copy may be mailed or e-mailed to Lydia Schindler by February 1, 2004 for the March/April issue.*

Illustrations on pages 1, 3, 6, and 14
© M. Suzanne Probst

## DNR Reports... by Glen Therres

The words **"old growth forest"** bring to mind a forest of gigantic trees where the sun does not reach the forest floor, or perhaps an image of Spotted Owls or other wildlife dependent on old growth forest ecosystems in the west. Though more prevalent in the Pacific Northwest or Alaska, old growth forests do occur in the east. The Great Smoky Mountains has numerous stands of old growth forest. **Even Maryland has some,** though where and how much we don't know.

To establish the scope and sites of old growth forest in our state, DNR has initiated an old growth inventory. We've started in Western Maryland, which has the greatest potential for finding old growth forest. We are concentrating our efforts, at this time, on public lands (mostly DNR lands), but hope to include private lands as our inventory proceeds.

In order to conduct such an inventory, one needs to define what one is looking for. Like any good scientist, we searched the published literature for the definition of "old growth." We found that old growth forest has been defined numerous ways by various experts. So, we took these various definitions and developed a set of criteria for DNR to use. In Maryland, an old growth forest one that exhibits most of the following characteristics:

- **A preponderance of old trees, the oldest of which exceed at least half of the projected maximum attainable age for that species.**
- **Shade-tolerant species present in all age/size classes.**
- **Randomly distributed canopy gaps.**
- **A high degree of structural diversity characterized by multiple growth layers (canopy, understory trees, shrub, herbaceous, ground layers) reflecting a broad spectrum of ages.**
- **An accumulation of dead wood of varying sizes and stages of decomposition, standing and down, accompanied by decadence in live dominant trees.**
- **Pit and mound topography can be observed, if the soil conditions permit it.**

An ideal old growth forest would have all of these characteristics, but that will not always be the case. Old growth forests must have old trees (notice I did not say big trees). Site conditions will dictate if the other characteristics are present or not.

Oaks, hickories, beech, tulip poplar, and pines dominate Maryland forests. The mountains of Western Maryland also contain hemlocks, sugar maples, and other northern hardwoods. Half of the projected maximum attainable age for these species ranges between 150-200 years, with most of the dominant oaks at the 200-year mark.

Since our State was settled over 350 years ago, and most of the land area has been modified over time, the likelihood of finding lots of forests more than 200 years old is not great. The colonists started clearing the forests to plant crops. By the time of the Civil War, the amount of standing forests in Maryland was at an all-time low, and the only extensive forests were in

*(DNR Reports continues on page 8)*

# Miniroutes: Bonus Atlas Information

by Nancy Martin and Walter Ellison

The maps of a breeding bird atlas do an excellent job of illustrating the distribution of breeding birds. However, an atlas provides little information on the abundance of those breeding birds—additional information that is valuable in conservation decision-making.

During the first Maryland-D.C. Atlas project (1983-87), an independent project using roadside censuses known as miniroutes was undertaken to learn more about the relative frequency of widespread bird species. The published Atlas shows the results of these surveys for 129 species as small maps shaded to indicate three frequency levels. For the current atlas, we are replicating the miniroute surveys so that we can make direct comparisons with past results and develop further insights into changes in breeding bird populations.

Those of you familiar with the Breeding Bird Surveys (BBS) run under the auspices of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service since 1966 will see many similarities between those and the atlas miniroutes. A miniroute is a roadside survey route, comprising 15 stops spaced at approximate half-mile intervals. Each route is plotted within a single atlas block. Volunteer observers proceed along the route, making a 3-minute stop at each of the 15 sites to identify all species they see and hear.

The routes must be completed within 2.5 hours after sunrise, and typically volunteers begin at sunup. Since bird activity remains high for the first 2.5 hours after sunrise, it's possible for observers to complete routes in two adjacent blocks in one morning.

Unlike the BBS, during which observers are asked to count the number of individuals of each species at a stop, miniroute observers need concern themselves only with which species are detected, by sight or sound. Frequency information is derived from tallying the number of stops that each species occurs at—e.g., an abundant species such as Common Grackle may be at 12 of 15 stops, a moderately common species such as Carolina Wren may be at 6 stops, and more localized species such as Kentucky Warbler may be at only 1 or 2 of the 15 stops. A computer program combines the frequency data with geographic coordinates for each block to produce the overall frequency maps represented in the atlas book.

On average, 35 to 45 species can be expected on most routes in the state. Species seen, as well as behaviors such as territorial or courtship display or breeding confirmations, are entered into the online atlas database as incidental observations for each block.

During the first atlas, miniroutes were run in about 770 of the 1,256 blocks covered statewide. For the current atlas, we hope to gather miniroute data from at least half of the blocks statewide. Our efforts began in June 2003, as volunteers across the state did their best to complete about 60 routes while dodging rain showers. For the 3 remaining years of the atlas, we will need to increase our efforts considerably to cover about 200 blocks per year. In order to assure even coverage across the state, we have designated a checkerboard grid of blocks for priority coverage.

We welcome all observers familiar with songs, calls, and visual identification of Maryland's birds to volunteer to do a few routes. In order to encourage people to cover more remote sections of the state, we are offering a modest mileage reimbursement for miniroute volunteers who wish it. Please contact miniroute coordinator Nancy Martin (23460 Clarissa Rd, Chestertown, MD 21620 or rossgull@crosslink.net) to volunteer or to obtain further information.

During our first year of doing miniroutes, the authors found the experience quite enjoyable. Compared to the task of trying to count all the caroling robins or flocking blackbirds on a BBS route, simply tallying species at stops on a miniroute was a breeze. Not only that, but being freed from counting allowed us to pick up not a few incidental atlas confirmations along the way, such as robins carrying food, or Tree Swallows nesting in a roadside bird box. Nancy also found that she really could put names to the strange chortling from the hedgerow (Yellow-breasted Chat) or the "churry-churry-churry" from the streamside woodlot (Kentucky Warbler)—both species unfamiliar just a short time ago. We also got to explore more of the back roads of Kent and Queen Anne's counties and even moved a few turtles out of harm's way (except the snapper laying eggs!). We discovered new birding areas, such as the Chestertown sewage lagoons, which happened to be adjacent to a designated stop. All in all, doing miniroutes is a great way to get out at a beautiful time of day to observe birds and contribute to the knowledge of Maryland's avian residents.

## The Conservation Connection

By Maureen F. Harvey

### MARYLAND

**Governor Robert Ehrlich and House Speaker Michael Busch (D-AA Co) have committed to a renewable energy portfolio bill this session.** Del. Carol Petzold (D-Mont Co) intends to reintroduce her 2003 renewable energy bill with the inclusion of nuclear power as a "renewable" energy source. The Maryland Conservation Council (a coalition of conservation-minded groups and individuals that reviews and comments on legislation introduced each year) feels it is critical for the environmental community to speak with one voice on the wind power issue, as we have continuing concerns about siting of the turbines.

**Governor Ehrlich has declared a moratorium on land preservation**—including Rural Legacy, Greenprint, and Program Open Space—until his administration decides upon a philosophy for selecting land for public purchase. These programs have already taken a huge hit; Rural Legacy was cut in half and Greenprint is scheduled to be phased out. **You may wish to express your opinion** by sending an email to the Governor from the Internet link http://www.gov.state.md.us/mail/ or by phoning his office at 410-974-3591.

**Speaking of land preservation, George Alderson** has penned several letters for the **Howard Chapter** on conservation issues of concern to birders. Most recently, he prepared letters for Howard President Kurt Schwarz to send to the National Park Service (NPS) and County Commissioners and Tourism Departments in adjacent counties (i.e., Washington and Allegany in MD and Morgan in WV) in support of a proposal by the C&O Canal Association to **preserve the abandoned Western Maryland Railway line between Hancock and Cumberland**. Local landowners are pushing NPS to sell the property to owners of the adjoining lands. George feels there's so little publicly owned land in the Potomac Valley that it should not be sold off, especially with our State government pulling back from its acquisition program. The MOS Conservation Committee favors this initiative and will prepare letters from the MOS. In addition, George encourages all chapters to send similar letters. For a model letter, and additional addresses, see the MOS web site.*

### PENNSYLVANIA BANS RELEASE OF HOUSE CATS

In response to a request from the manager of the American Bird Conservancy's Cats Indoors program, the MOS emailed the Pennsylvania Game Commission in support of their proposal to protect wildlife and cats by prohibiting the release of domestic cats. The proposed rule passed! (It is estimated that as many as 80 million birds are killed annually in the US by outdoor cats.)*

### NATIONAL LEGISLATION

Bird-related conservation news appears regularly on the on the "Birding News" page of the American Birding Association (ABA) website, www.americanbirding.org/news/birdnews.htm.

**Paul Bacich**, MOS member and former Conservation Program Manager for ABA, has accepted a position with Swarovski. We appreciate his timely Conservation Letters, which have provided insight into issues important to birders, and wish him well in his new pursuits. Hopefully, someone else at ABA will step into his big shoes! Excerpts from his last email follow:

#### Energy Bill Fracas

The Energy Bill, universally derided by environmental and public interest groups, was passed in the House but not in the Senate. This bill was advertised as providing for national security, energy savings, and innovative energy development. However, less than 10 percent of its $25.7 billion in tax breaks is devoted to increasing energy efficiency. About $14.5 billion of the tax breaks will go to fossil fuels and nuclear power subsidies. The bill doesn't even repeal the indefensible $100,000 "Hummer loophole" tax break for heavy equipment, passed as part of the 2002 Bush tax cut, which the wealthy have been using to buy gas guzzlers like the Hummer H2.

The Energy Bill covers a vast array of issues from nuclear power to wind generation, ethanol, fuel efficiency standards, hydroelectric policy, Alaska natural gas delivery, and coal uses. This Energy Bill again is more a hodgepodge of special provisions for old energy and Big Oil than any coherent energy policy for the country's future. The blackout in the Northeast and Midwest in August, moreover, is being used as a way to break into the drilling debate, as if more oil drilling would lessen the chances of future blackouts. The bill aims to alter the moratorium on offshore oil drilling with a comprehensive "survey" for future expansive drilling. This would open up new areas offshore that have been closed to oil exploitation for some time. Many of the energy measures, such as drilling expansion, will have negative consequences on the future of bird conservation.

#### Transportation Bill Silver Lining

Now, for something a little more positive on another mega-bill, the Transportation Bill:

In September 2003, the US House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly (327 to 90) to restore funding to the Transportation Enhancements (TEs). This is a program

which provides money for bicycle and pedestrian trails, sidewalks, scenic beautification, and related actions. This vote was in response to an unwise July House Appropriations Committee decision to eliminate TE funding while increasing highway spending by $4.5 billion. (Currently, the federal government provides approximately $600 million annually for Transportation Enhancements activities, a portion of which has been used for some birding trails in states such as VA and TX.) For more details on the Petri-Olver amendment to recover the TEs, see http://www.railtrails.org/whatwedo/policy/tea21b.asp

**FWS PROPOSED CHANGE TO ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT**

The MOS submitted comments to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) opposing a proposal to loosen restrictions on importing certain banned animal products. The proposal aimed to provide much-needed funding restricted for wildlife conservation into economically-depressed developing countries. We believe local people would benefit more by keeping their wildlife alive and encouraging eco-tourism. Here are MOS's comments in part:

"Without the strictest of government controls and oversight; without mutually developed plans that integrally involve local communities, landowners, conservation organizations, and others; and without a firm system of checks and balances, including honest accounting; these proposed rule changes would be more likely to result in the destructive depletion of endangered species for profit rather than any sustainable conservation benefits. . . . In the experience of members of our Conservation Committee, many "range" countries do not have the infrastructure, political support or resources to effectively manage such a program. Even in the USA, ESA violations routinely occur."*

**FCC INQUIRY ON THE EFFECTS OF COMMUNICATION TOWERS ON MIGRATORY BIRDS**

The MOS signed on to a letter from the ABC to the Federal Communication Commission to encourage the FCC to take action to prevent avian mortality at communications towers. Some background, from ABC:*

"It is estimated that the 90,000+ communication towers in the U.S. cause the death of at least 5 million and as many as 40 million birds a year. Over 90% of species killed are neotropical migratory birds. . . . [Even though] the FCC has received extensive information indicating that communication towers are a significant and continuing source of mortality to migratory birds, it has refused to act to better protect [them]. In 1999, the Director of the US FWS urged the FCC to complete an Environmental Impact Statement to ascertain more on mortality, causes, and mitigation, but the FCC refused. . . . The FCC now is conducting a Notice of Inquiry on the Effects of Communication Towers on Migratory Birds that requests information the FCC already possesses and that proposes no changes and, thus, maintains the status quo. Public comments are due by November 12, 2003."

Here's an excerpt of the letter MOS signed:*

"We write to urge the FCC to stop the stalling and act to require preventative measures on all existing and new communications towers to prevent avian mortality. We suggest that the FCC adopt the September 2000 U.S. FWS Guidelines for siting and construction of communication towers by the FCC. These measures, supported by the best available data, indicate that co-location, keeping towers under 200', avoiding guy wires, minimizing lighting, and using only white strobes at minimum required pulse rates would greatly reduce, if not eliminate, avian mortality."

**For text of letter, see the MOS web site: www.mdbirds.org/programs/conserv.html*

## *Baltimore Sun* Highlights Maryland Birding

The Sunday, November 30 issue of the *Baltimore Sun* carried an extensive article by Theo Lippman, Jr. on "The nation's top recreation: Would you believe birding?" Lippman quotes a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service report estimating that in 2001 there were 46 million bird watchers, "more than the number of individuals who attended organized baseball games in a season." He catalogs a number of books on birds and birding, including "A Birder's Guide to Baltimore and Baltimore County," edited by Baltimore Bird Club member Elliot Kirschbaum. A collection of birding journalism soon to be published by Bill Thompson III, editor of *Bird Watcher's Digest,* will include a number of articles by the late Eirik Blom. "Blom's extensive research material was placed with the Roger Tory Peterson Institute's archives by his friend, Eugene Scarpula of Miller's Island, who has been praised . . . as 'a great amateur field ornithologist'." In addition, Lippman writes about the World Series of Birding and Audubon, Peterson, Kaufman, and Sibley. Again, "according to the FWS, American birders spent $32 billion in retail purchases in 2001, which generated $85 billion in economic benefits, $13 billion in tax revenues, and nearly 900,000 jobs. And the public didn't have to foot the bill for ball parks."

*—Martha Waugh*

**Honeymoon Birding by Allegany Members**

Carol Broderick reports that "J.B. Churchill and Donna Kyle were married October 24 at the Courthouse in Cumberland. They honeymooned in Orlando, Florida for five days where J.B. managed to get five life birds. We're pretty sure that Donna got her 'life' bird!! They are currently living in Frostburg and are building a house near Dan's Mountain.

"Ray Kiddy saw 23 Golden Eagles on Thursday, November 13 during a "white out" on Town Hill and 7 Golden Eagles the following day. Our annual Banquet was held on November 1, and guest speaker Dick Smith presented a program on 'Rare Butterflies of Maryland.' It was such a success that we had three guests from the Frederick Chapter attending, which is a first for our club!"

**Harford Bird Club Honors Long-time Member**

The executive board of the Harford Bird Club has made Emma Kohout—its member of longest standing—an honorary member. Emma and her husband, Walter, joined in 1950, the year after the club was formed. She attended meetings until about a year ago and was present at the club's 50th anniversary in 1999. Emma turned 93 in June and, until a few months ago, was living independently in her own home. She is now residing in an assisted living facility on the Eastern Shore. She can receive mail at Dixson House, 108 North Higgins Street, Easton, MD 21601.

**Tri-County Rewards Atlas Efforts**

This year's Wicomico Atlas Awards were presented at the Tri-County Club's annual September picnic. Second place went to Linda Cashman and Ellen Lawler for their "colossal 42 hours" of covering their blocks. The top spot went to Sam Dyke for his sightings from his kayak confirming nesting Barn Owls and adding probable Northern Harriers—great birds for Wicomico.

Tri-County club members continue to pile up the birding trip miles. During one week this last summer, Betty Pitney was in British Columbia, Chris Dominick and Mike Walsh zig-zagged around Colorado, and world birder Eric Decker was spotted in Kenya.

**Caroline Chapter Hosts "Kids and Beginners"**

In an initiative to engage more young people in bird watching, the Caroline Bird Club invited kids and beginners on a bird walk in the Martinak State Park in Denton on September 27. The day began with fog and rain, so the group heard more birds than they saw. They did spot lots of bluejays, Robins, Belted Kingfishers, and Pileated Woodpeckers and heard Osprey and Catbirds. The leaders were Jessica Vooris, Danny Poet, Mariana Nuttle. Guests were Patrick, Emily, and Alison Vooris, Rob Simmons, and Gail, Ashlyn, and Katlyn Dadds. Despite the bad weather, the participants say they had a good time. On future trips, the club plans to ask Martinak/Tuckahoe State Parks to borrow the binoculars they purchased with a grant from MOS.

**Baltimore Bird Club (BBC) Member Visits Hungary, Slovakia, and Transylvania**

Steve Sanford toured Hungary, Slovakia, and Transylvania (now part of in Romania) for 2 weeks beginning in late May. He reports, "Many European birds are beautiful and spectacular, and it is fascinating to compare and contrast how Nature dealt with habitats much like our own in a different hemisphere." Steve, joining four British birders and a guide, spent the first 4 days in northern Hungary, an area of rolling hills somewhat like our Appalachian region. He saw Golden Oriole, Chaffinch, Robin, Hawfinch and, on a side trip into the mountains of Slovakia, his favorite, a pair of Bullfinches. He also saw an Eagle Owl, a Ural Owl, and Imperial Eagle. The next 4 days found Steve in "the Hortobagy" in eastern Hungary, part of a vast plain containing a great many natural and artificial wetlands as well as dry prairie. The high point was a fairly close look at about 10 Great Bustards, mainly males in breeding plumage. He saw numerous raptors including Saker Falcon, Red-footed Falcon, Long-legged Buzzard, and Lesser-spotted Eagle. A special treat in the wetlands was "a cute Scops Owl at a nest box, and four fuzzy young Long-eared Owls." Eurasian Cuckoos, Steve reports, really do sound like the clocks! In all, he saw 15 species of warblers, "most of which are comically dull compared to ours." He also saw seven species of woodpecker including all three of the "Spotted" woodpeckers, Syrian, Green, and Black Woodpeckers, plus Wryneck.

The group's last 3 days were in Transylvania. (The birthplace of Count Dracula, in the wonderfully preserved medieval town of Sighisoara, was not scary at all, Steve says.) He saw a Wallcreeper, a dainty little bird that lives on steep cliffs and flutters across chasms like a butterfly. He also saw new life birds: Common Rosefinch, Tree Pipit, Eurasian Nutcracker, and a female Capercaillie, "a large bird like our turkey, but good-looking." Steve saw 177 species, of which 70 were life birds. According to Steve, Eastern Europe is *the* place to go in Europe. He does believe one should be careful about choosing a tour guide, however, and offers to help anyone who is interested in birding in Hungary. You can reach him at 410-922-5103 or tanager@bcpl.net.

**Cecil Bird Club Finds a Special Feed to Lure Birders**

The Cecil Bird Club mounted an exhibit at North East's annual Yesterdays Festival September 27. Candi Lee staffed the table with the club's display board in the background. She found that a dish of colorful hard candies did a lot to attract passers-by. Once they were "feeding," she gave them club brochures, a checklist of Cecil County birds, and sold them $1 raffle tickets. (Wild Birds Unlimited donated raffle prizes, and club member Jerry Newman contributed two of his wonderful bluebird houses.) Any Cecil Club members who joined or renewed prior to September 20 were also entered into the raffle. Prize winners included Jessica Mullen, Brian Moyer, Julius Meisel, Jerry Newman, Matt and Kathy Kazmear. Lizzie Parker won the grand prize, a bird feeder from WBU.

**Montgomery Bird Club Author Publishes Winged Messengers**

Howard Youth, Montgomery Bird Club member currently living in Spain, has written a 72-page paper, *Winged Messengers*, for the Worldwatch Institute. Howard documents the decline in bird populations and the human factors contributing to it. He believes 12% of the world's bird population faces extinction in the next century. He maintains that "the best way to preserve biodiversity is to prevent species, and their complex habitats, from becoming endangered in the first place." His recommendation? "While we need protective legislation in some areas, often just the full implementation and enforcement of already established international laws and agreements would go a long way toward saving the world's remaining bird diversity. . . .The actions needed to ensure a secure future for birds are the very same ones needed to achieve a sustainable human future." *Winged Messengers* (Worldwatch Paper 165) can be ordered online at www.worldwatch.org or at 888-544-2303 (toll-free). The cost is $5, plus $4 for postage and handling.

**Patuxent Bird Club Area Loses Two Birders**

**Dorothy Rauth** died in the summer of 2002. Although she herself was never a member of MOS, Dorothy encouraged Eleanor Robbins to organize the Patuxent Bird Club. She lived on the Howard County side of the Patuxent River and phoned Eleanor with her bird observations, and some of her information appears in early issues of *Maryland Birdlife*. In addition to keeping birding records, she wrote poetry. Recently, she had graciously allowed Howard Chapter members to bird on her property.

**Elwood Fisher,** a longtime member of the Patuxent Bird Club, was an engineer who helped survey the Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive and plan U.S. embassies and legations around the world. He was a member of the Rotary Club, served as its president, and had been named Rotarian of the Year. In 1993 the Laurel-Beltsville Branch of the American Heart Association honored him for his contributions of time and talent to the community.

When Eleanor Robbins started to place nest boxes for Eastern Bluebirds, Elwood recruited homeowners to adopt boxes and he even lined up Harold Norwood to construct boxes. After his memorial service in St. Philip's Episcopal Church, attendees—including Jane and Eleanor Robbins—were served from a big white cake bearing an Eastern Bluebird with the legend, "Elwood, Our Bluebird."

**Anne Arundel Member Passed Away on May 27**

Bobbi Reichwein wrote a moving tribute to **Mary O'Leary** for the Anne Arundel Bird Club newsletter, excerpted here: "Mary and I were friends for around 20 years—it seems like forever. . . .She was very interested in nature and the environment as was I. So we started going to bird club meetings. . . .We went to the local friary to look for owls and were rewarded with a flock of Chimney Swifts flying down the friary chimneys to roost for the night. And the club bird trips—many members will remember Mary sleeping on the wall on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge/Tunnel at one of the pull-offs. . . .Or driving around Greenbury Point in the ice and snow. . . . She taught me to appreciate the beauty of the marsh. As far as I was concerned, it was a mosquito-y, smelly place. But, she showed me the golden colors in the fall and imitated the call of the Red-winged Blackbird. She was always willing to volunteer to help the club and to help others—she monitored bluebird boxes at Greenbury Point, delivered food to the hungry, and helped at the bird seed sale at Quiet Waters Park." Loving words for a true birder and friend of nature.

**Montgomery Bird Club Sustains Two Losses**

And Lola Oberman, writing in the Montgomery Bird Club's newsletter, remembered "the cheery presence of **Vince Jones** at our meetings. Vince died suddenly on July 22 at the age of 88 in his home in Chevy Chase. Vince, with his wife Kay, was a founding member of the Montgomery County Chapter of MOS and served for several years as its treasurer. He was a trip leader and a participant in Christmas Bird Counts and other censuses. For more than a decade, he contributed valuable records of winter residents and breeding birds on the grounds of Woodend. . . .For twelve years he led regular bird walks around Woodend, introducing many novices to the joys of birdwatching. Ted and I were among those novices. . . .Vince was a distinguished military historian, whose book, *Manhattan: The Army and the Atomic Bomb*, published in 1985, has been hailed as 'an indispensable contribution to the history of the atomic age'."

**Leon Greenberg,** 71, died in August. He collapsed while biking, part of a vigorous daily 17-mile regimen, typically joined, during the last six miles or so, by his wife Jeanette. Leon and Jeanette were familiar figures on Montgomery field trips. Leon had been a member of the mathematics faculty at the University of Maryland for the past 39 years.

**Frederick Club Members Take Flight (in Autos)**

A group from the Frederick Chapter traveled to southeastern Arizona for nine days of birding this past August. The travelers were David and Carol Smith, Michael Welch, Gary Smyle, Scott Edie, Julie Maynard, Bob and Marcia Balestri, Vera Brechbiel, Helen Horrocks, Katherine Grandine, Beth Zang, and Mary Ann Beverly. David Smith says, "For several in the group, it was their first birding trip to Arizona, so there were life list additions galore. Highlights were too numerous to mention, but a few of particular note were an Elegant Trogon giving great views in Cave Creek Canyon, a Short-tailed Hawk in the Chiricahua mountains, incredible numbers of hummingbirds, 12 species in all, including Plain-capped Starthroat and Lucifer Hummingbird in Ash Canyon, and two Common Black-Hawks in Aravaipa Canyon. Our trip into California Gulch was delayed by a flat tire on one of our vehicles, but we persevered and were rewarded with great views of singing Five-striped Sparrows and Varied Buntings. On the walk out of the gulch we came across Montezuma Quail and Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, a bird whose name is longer than it is. The group totaled 196 species of birds over these nine days. Spectacular scenery, exciting birding every day, and great fellowship made for a wonderful trip."

## DNR Reports (continued from page 2)

the mountains. At the turn of the previous century, logging operations felled most of those remaining forests. Thus, nearly all of Maryland's forests today are second growth and less than 100 years old. However, not every forest stand was cleared or cut and some old growth forests or forest remnants persist.

Crabtree Slopes in Garrett County is our largest known old growth forest, while Belt Woods in Prince George's County is perhaps our best-known stand. Others exist. During our first year of inventory, we combed Green Ridge State Forest for old growth and found 13 stands. They vary in size from 5 to 35 acres, with most less than 10 acres each. Total acreage of old growth on Green Ridge State Forest is 138 acres out of the 44,000-acre land holding. Not much!

The oldest tree found was a white oak estimated at 475 years old. Most trees were in the 200-300 year range. None of these stands have gigantic trees. In fact, the largest stand (35 acres) is stunted oaks on a shale barren slope. These are not your stereotypical old growth visions. You can see larger diameter trees in many second-growth forests in central Maryland.

We are currently looking for old growth at Potomac-Garrett and Savage River State Forests, as well as the wildlife management areas and state parks in Western Maryland. We will be looking east of the mountains in a year or so. **If you know of any forests that may meet the criteria for old growth, please let me know. We will check them out!**

(GTHERRES@dnr.state.md.us)

# Birds of Note

**It's Official: the Maryland Kelp Gull**

Maryland's Kelp Gull (*Larus dominicanus*) has gained official status. In November the Maryland/DC Records Committee voted unanimously to list "Shrimpy," who, as the report notes, "has been a virtual resident of Sandgates, St. Mary's Co, since at least January 25, 1998." Phil Davis, the committee's Executive Secretary, reports that "many issues were researched and explored during the committee's review of this bird. A decision report summarizing these issues can be found as a six-page PDF document on the MD/DCRC web pages on the MOS web site at the following URL:
www.mdbirds.org/mddcrc/pdf/kegudec.pdf

**New Highs for the Comp List**

The Maryland comp list hit an all-time high in 2003, list-keeper Fran Saunders reports, and—pending the formal addition of the Kelp Gull—is bound to swell yet more. Going into the Christmas Count season, MD comp totaled 346, "a great big 83.2% of the 416 species on the state list" (with the Kelp Gull, 417). In addition, another five species reported in 2003 are under review by the Records Committee.*

The comp list got a big boost in October with a flurry of finds at Assateague Island, notably a Western Tanager and a Western Wood-Pewee, both discovered October 4 by Jim Stasz; the Yellow-headed Blackbird spotted during the Big Sit October 12; and a Black-throated Gray Warbler found October 22 by Sam Dyke. In Carroll Co on October 4, Bob Ringler and Bill Ellis identified a Cave Swallow at the New Windsor sewage ponds.

On November 9, Mark Hoffman discovered a Northern Shrike in Ocean City, in the northern part of the "96th Street woods." On November 18, Matt Haffner added a King Eider from the Ocean City Inlet. And on December 3 Jim Peters relayed yet another treasure from Fort McHenry, a flycatcher that proved to be, with Marshall Iliff's prodding, an Ash-throated.

Fran is still pulling for some unusual winter finches. "Surprises are still possible in this extraordinary year," she says, "so stay tuned."

**The five species under review by the Records Committee are a Reddish Egret seen June 23 by John Hubbell at Skimmer Island (Ocean City); a Long-billed Curlew that Marcia Watson-Whitmyre spotted August 31 near her home near the MD/DE line in Cecil Co; a Black-tailed Gull reported by Jim Peters from Fort McHenry September 6; the Western Wood-Pewee; and the Cave Swallow.*

## Help Wanted: EFM Rep

The Environmental Fund for Maryland (EFM) is an umbrella fund-raising organization. It is listed on the Federal Combined Campaign and on the Baltimore city campaign as well as various corporate campaigns. MOS, as a member, receives a share of the monies raised by EFM plus all donations designated for MOS. During the past fiscal year, MOS received over $2,500 through this effort. In the past we have used such income to support extra scholarships and special conservation projects.

Our current EFM representative, **Marcia Balestri,** has done a splendid job, taking special training and participating in a large number of EFM activities. Thank you, Marcia! But now she is ready to step down, and I am looking for a person or group of people to support this effort. There is certainly enough here for a group to be involved.

Marcia states that this position can take up as much time as a person wants it to. The only thing that absolutely must be done is submit the applications to participate in the campaign. There are several of these, and they are usually due near the beginning of the year. The other main thing one should do is attend campaign events. Marcia usually made 3 or 4 a year, but it's possible to do more. This is an important task, because if MOS gets good visibility, donations will increase.

If you might be interested, please contact me at president@mdbirds.org. Anyone who would like to discuss the position with Marcia can reach her at 301-473-5098. For qualifications and responsibilities, check the MOS website.

*—Paul Zucker*

# The Big Sit, Maryland Style

"What an incredible notion! Plop yourself down in a circle 17 feet in diameter and count all the species that pass you by during one day in October," writes Norm Saunders. "Even more incredibly, 95 teams have so far reported their Big Sit results from around the United States. And the most amazing part of the whole thing? Maryland managed to, *er*, field nine teams (up from five in 2002), ranging from hyper-organized sits in many of Maryland's hotspots down to a one-person sit, Danny Bystrak in the midst of the Jug Bay Wetlands."

At day's end, the Maryland teams had done themselves proud. A high-powered crew "sitting" on Assateague Island built an unsurmountable lead with 103 species, and four other Maryland contestants placed in the top 25.

The Assateague Island team, dubbed "Sitting on Our Assateague" and captained by our own **Matt Hafner,** drew its circle at the Sinepuxent Bay end of the Bayside campground area of the National Seashore. Team members, checking in at various times, included Jim Stasz, Zach Baer, Mike Burchett, Mark Hoffman, Norm Saunders, Chris Starling, and a Carroll County Bird Club field trip group. They are also in the running for most imaginative name.

**Danny Bystrak,** sitting at the south end of Jug Bay, single-handedly recorded an impressive 67 species.

"The Star-Spangled Birders" drew their circle at Fort McHenry, of course. Captained by **Jim Peters,** team members Cathy Carroll, Mary Chetelat, Wendy Taparanskas, and Keith Costley counted from 5 a.m. until 6 p.m. and tallied 62 species. Highlights were an Eastern Meadowlark and a female Indigo Bunting. The SSBs managed six warbler species—Magnolia, Yellow-rumped, Eastern Palm, Common Yellowthroat, Cape May, and American Redstart—and five species of sparrow.

Kent County's "Kentish Plovers" convened for their second Big Sit at Eastern Neck NWR. Sitters included **Walter Ellison,** Nancy Martin, Ian Ellison, Scott Crabtree, Meg Perry, Peter Mann, and Janet Shields. This year they totaled 60 species, up from 56 in 2002, earning them the 18th slot on the BWD North American list. They also observed 38 migrating Monarch Butterflies, a mole cricket sprinting across the road, a three-inch-long bright green grasshopper, a praying mantis, and a Cloudless Sulfur.

Coming in 23rd with 55 species was the Montgomery Bird Club's "Sitting Ducks," led by **Rick Sussman** (who notes that the team's name dates to 2002, when the area was beset by deadly snipers). Rick was supported by Jim Green, Bob Hartman, Cynthia and Tony Mead, Linda Friedland, Clive Harris, Janet Millenson, Rob and Denise Gibbs, and Gemma Radko. Jim Green put in 12 hours at the circle at Black Hill Regional Park. Jim also supplied a grill and bratwursts. Best finds were a late Green Heron, four Common Loons, and a good selection of raptors, including American Kestrel, a single flyby Merlin and a late Osprey.

The "Anne Arundel Adventurers," captained by **Sue Ricciardi,** hunkered down at Kinder Park. Joining her were George Thomas, Al Haury, Mark Bange, Linda Baker, Dotty Mumford, Harvey Welsh, Tom and Sharon Bradford, Paul Speyser, Pat and Juanita Tate, Bobbi Reichwein, Lydia D'Ambro, and Larry Zoller. A Severna Park Boy Scout troop working on a bird life badge also happened by; the Adventurers were able to help them with information and bird identification and hope that they'll see some of them again. The observers counted 71 hawks of nine species. Their total was 46 species for the day. George Thomas brought a quantity of doughnuts and went for pizza, the best kind of food for a circle.

**Arlene Ripley** held up the banner from a viewing platform at the Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary, where she was joined by Jeff Shenot and Sigrid Stiles. Together they tallied 51 species over a 12-hour period. Highlights were the Eastern Meadowlark, Common Moorhen, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

The Howard County team chose a prophetic name, "The Go-Away Birders." And, they went away. Led by **Kurt Schwarz,** the sitters at Centennial Park were disappointed by a low count of 46 species. They did see Great Horned Owl and Greater Yellowlegs; two Chimney Swifts were a nice surprise.

**Jean Tierney** has participated in the Big Sit for the last 3 years. This year she, her son, and her Mom watched from her backyard in Newburg, Charles Co. Jean likes the opportunity to sit back, relax and watch nature pass by. Their best bird this year was a Bald Eagle.

*—Martha Waugh*

*(more about "The Big Sit" on page 10)*

## The Big Sit, Maryland Style

*(continued from page 9)*

**Captain Matt Haffner's account:**

The Assateague Big Sit was quite a success this year! We had better weather, more eyes, and a nice movement of birds. Last year, we ended with 69 species and felt that 80 was a reasonable goal for this year. We started the count at 5:40 a.m. and ended up around noon as the push of birds died down and because we really wanted to bird some other areas of the island!

Pre-dawn listening produced a good Swainson's Thrush flight with a few Gray-cheeks mixed in. Our only American Woodcock was one that Jim Stasz put in the flashlight around 6:15. At dawn there was a Spotted Sandpiper on the beach that stayed only briefly (the tide was very high all day). Shortly after daybreak, the flight began. We had a large movement of Flickers, Tree Swallows, and warblers. The flight was one of the largest I have seen on Assateague and continued until noon.

We passed our old tally by sometime between 7:30 and 8 a.m. and were at 85 species by about 10:00. The best bird of the day is on both Bob Ringler's and Mark Hoffman's "Most Wanted Birds in MD" list. Unfortunately they both were absent from the area when the Yellow-headed Blackbird flew by in the company of three Red-winged Blackbirds. Maybe next year, guys!

Other highlights included Dickcissels! We had at least 3 at one time and others later on, at least 6 and possibly as many as 10. Purple Finches and Pine Siskin both put in an appearance, hopefully indicating at least a minor finch flight this year. Plus, there were several "only on the Big Sit!" highlights. My favorites were Mark keenly spotting a Brown Creeper found by Jim Stasz over 100 feet away from the circle, and all of us stretching ourselves to see a Red-eyed Vireo that was easily seen by taking two steps out of the circle.

Imagine how blown away we all were when we finished the morning with a tally of 103 species!

## MOS Calendar

### January–February 2004

**Thursday, January 1**

☆ **Howard**. Start your 2004 Bird List! Meet at Centennial Park boat ramp 8 AM for half to full day. Focus on Columbia Lakes with easy walking. If weather and birding cooperate, we will stop for lunch at local restaurant and head to Triadelphia Reservoir. Facilities available. Call **Bonnie** for info, 410-461-3361.

☆ **Montgomery**. Earliest Bird: Georgetown Reservoir and DC Hot Spots. Half day. Start the New Year right! Everyone welcome. Meet 8 AM Georgetown Reservoir, NW DC, by gate leading to dike between pools. Reservations not required. Leader: **Mike Bowen,** 301-530-5764.

**Friday, January 2**

MEETING. **Anne Arundel**. ***Dr. William McShea*** will present "Deer in the Eastern Forest." 8 PM at DNR Conference Room, Tawes Bldg, Annapolis. Hosts: **Roy & Jeannie Shine.**

**Saturday, January 3**

☆ **Cecil**. Eastern Neck NWR & Remington Farms. Meet 7 AM Big Elk Mall Dunkin' Donuts parking area. Full day. Bring lunch, beverage and dress warmly. Leader: **Parke John,** 410-287-6037.

☆ **Patuxent**. Fran Uhler Natural Area, a Bowie hotspot for winter birds. Walk starts 7:30 AM. Park located at end of Lemons Bridge Road, off MD 197, north of Bowie. Call **Fred Fallon,** 301-262-1518, for add'l info.

☆ indicates **Field Trips**

**Sunday, January 4**

CHRISTMAS COUNT. **Anne Arundel**. Coordinators: **Sue Ricciardi,** 410-647-9513, **Lynn Davidson** & **Hal Wierenga,** 410-647-743.

**Wednesday, January 7**

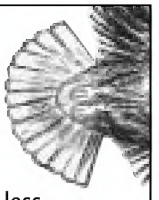
☆ **Baltimore**. 9:30 AM-Noon. First Wednesdays at Fort McHenry. Monthly visit to assist in survey of bird activity. Cancelled in bad weather (high wind, fog, rain, snow). Leader: **Jim Peters,** 410-429-0966.

**Thursday, January 8**

MEETING. **Frederick**. ***Hank Kaestner*** will present "Around the World Birding Adventures in 2003." Places visited include China, Japan, Singapore, Australia, Madagascar, Finland, California, and Brazil. Meet C. Burr Artz Library in downtown Frederick 7 PM. Contact **Marcia Balestri,** 301-473-5098 or mebalestri@erols.com

MEETING. **Howard.** "Little Brown Birds: Identifying the Sparrows," by ***Walter Ellison.*** Longfellow Elementary School, Columbia. Hospitality and club bookstore 7:30 PM, meeting/program 8 PM. For more info call **Kurt Schwarz,** 410-461-1643.

### Telling Tales



Heard, or overheard, any good bird(ing) stories lately? Write 'em up and send 'em in. Fifty words or less, please. An example:

With our scopes firmly planted in the sand, we were checking the shoreline when a couple approached and asked, "Are you looking at the Napoleon's Gulls?"

*—Linda Friedland*

### Saturday, January 10

MIDWINTER COUNT (Audrey Carroll). **Frederick**. Meet at Sanctuary 6 AM. Dress warmly with waterproof boots. Call **David Smith,** 410-549-7082, for further info.

☆ **Montgomery**. Ocean City to Broadkill Marsh. Full day. Joint trip with ANS. Wintering waterfowl, gulls, terns, shorebirds. Meet 8:30 AM at parking lot at Ocean City Inlet. Note: Trip may be moved to either of next 2 weekends if weather conditions so dictate. Reservations required. Leader: **John Bjerke,** 301-963-8525.

PARTY. **Carroll**. Annual holiday party at Yingling residence. This is always a good time. 8 PM til ?? Contact **Sue Yingling,** 410-876-8211, to coordinate your pot luck dish.

### Sunday, January 11

MIDWINTER COUNT (Fred Archibald). **Frederick**. Meet at Sanctuary 6 AM. Dress warmly with waterproof boots. Contact **Bob Schaefer,** 301-831-5660, rjs30@erols.com for further info.

☆ **Tri-County**. Maryland and Delaware Coast for winter specialties and hopefully a few discoveries from Christmas bird counts. Leader **Sam Dyke,** 410-742-5497. Meet Asbury Methodist Church (north parking lot), Salisbury, 7:30 AM. Bring lunch/snack/drink.

☆ **Harford.** Conowingo Gull Watch. This hydroelectric fish Cuisinart pulls in good numbers of waterfowl and Bald Eagles as well as such rarities as Black-legged Kittiwake and Glaucous, Iceland, Thayer's, and Black-headed Gulls. Meet leader **Les Eastman** at 8 AM at Fisherman's Park at the bottom (east end) of Shures Landing Rd. Contact les@birdtreks.com for more information.

COVERED DISH SUPPER. **Baltimore**. Dining at 5 PM, talk at 5:30: "Around the World Bird Watching Adventures in 2003," by ***Hank Kaestner.*** Call **Shirley Geddes,** 410-377- 6583, after Jan. 5 to confirm where supper will be held (because of possible renovation, Cylburn might be closed).

### Thursday, January 15

MEETING. **Caroline**. "Wildlife of the Terai, Southern Nepal," by ***Mike Price.*** 7:30 PM. Caroline County Public Library, 100 Market St., Denton.

### Friday, January 16

MEETING. **Harford.** ***Hank Kaestner,*** a consultant for McCormick and a birdwatcher, will present "2003: A Birder's Odyssey." Meet 7 PM at Churchville Presbyterian church, MD 22 and MD 136. For more information call **Jean Wheeler,** 410-879-7424.

### Friday-Monday, January 16-19

☆ **Montgomery**. Outer Banks of North Carolina. 3+ days. Wintering ducks, geese, swans, shorebirds, loons, gannets. Search also for less common gulls and variety of wintering land birds. Call leader for motel and trip info. A perennially popular trip. Because of damage caused by Hurricane Isabel, we may not be able to take the ferry to Ocracoke this year, and some other changes to usual itinerary may be made as well. Reservations required. Tentative limit: 14. Leader: **Frank Witebsky,** 301-871-7990, with **Jim Green** co-leading.

### Saturday-Monday, Jan. 17-19

☆ **Howard.** Three-day Maryland Eastern Shore birding extravaganza: Ocean City, EAVaughn, Assateague. Limit 16. Contact **Bonnie** at 410-461-3361.

### Saturday, January 17

MIDWINTER COUNT. **Carroll**. Please coordinate locations with **Bob Ringler,** 410-549-6031. Join Tally Rally at Marc & Tammy Schwaab's residence at 7 PM. RSVP to **Schwaabs**, 410-857-4913.

☆ **Cecil**. Ocean City, full day. Meet 6 AM Big Elk Mall Dunkin Donuts parking area. Bring lunch, beverage and dress warmly. Leader: **Sean McCandless,** 410-392-3407.

☆ **Frederick**. Maryland hotline trip. Looking for winter rarities reported on the hotline. Emphasis will be on Frederick County birds, but we may wander farther afield depending on what's out there. Meet Urbana Park&Ride South 7:30 AM. Call **Mike Welch,** 301-874-5828, for info.

☆ **Baltimore**. 8 AM. New Design Road and Lilypons. For Horned Larks, sparrows and hawks, possible Lapland Longspurs. Telescopes useful. Some walking in exposed, cold, windy fields; wear warm clothing and boots. Leader: **Pete Webb,** 410-486-1217, or pwebb@bcpl.net

☆ **Washington**. Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. Meet 8 AM Rte 66 Park&Ride. Contact **Anna Hutzell,** 301-797-8454, for info.

☆ **Anne Arundel.** Winter birds at backyard feeders. 8 AM. Leader: **Lynn Kenny**, 301-464-8371.

*(MOS Calendar continues on page 12)*

**MOS Calendar** *(continued from page 11)*

☆ **Harford.** 13th Annual Harford Co Feeder Tour. This morning trip will visit 3 or more "winter bird equipped" houses in the Susquehanna section of the county. Participation is limited, so please contact Les Eastman at les@birdtreks.com to reserve your spot and receive meeting time and location.

### Wednesday, January 21

MEETING. **Montgomery.** "Bird Conservation in the US," by ***Gerald Winegrad,*** Vice President for Policy, American Bird Conservancy. 7:30 PM. Potomac Presbyterian Church, 10301 River Rd, Potomac.

### Saturday, January 24

MIDWINTER COUNT (C&O Canal). **Frederick**. To participate, contact **Mike Milton,** 202-965-6672, or Mike.Milton@verizon.net.

MIDWINTER COUNT. **Baltimore**. To participate in post-migration bird count in your choice of location in Baltimore City or County, call **Pete Webb,** 410-486-1217, pwebb@bcpl.net

☆ **Harford.** Havre de Grace Waterfowl. Join local guide **Randy Robertson** to scan out on the upper bay to locate wintering waterfowl. Swans, geese, and a good mix of bay ducks expected. Meet at the Decoy Museum at 1 P.M. Contact Randy at 410-273-9029 for more information.

### Sunday, January 25

☆ **Anne Arundel.** Annapolis Neck and Thomas Point for waterfowl and soup social (see newsletter for details). Meet Noon at Bay Ridge. Leader/Host: **Gerald Winegrad,** 410-280-8956.

### Monday, January 26

MEETING. **Tri-County**. "The Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Blackwater NWR," by ***Glenn Carowan,*** Refuge Mgr. 7 PM Asbury Methodist Church, Salisbury (Fox Room, south entrance).

### Tuesday, January 27

MEETING. Washington. ***Dale Nisbet*** of the National Park Service will discuss the restoration of Peregrine Falcons in Maryland and West Virginia. Meet Mt. Aetna Camp & Retreat Center 7:30 PM. Call **Anna Hutzell,** 301-797-8454 for further info.

### Wednesday, January 28

MEETING. **Cecil**. "Cecil Community College Atlas Project Success Story" by ***Shannon Schade.*** 7 PM Elkton High School Media Center. Raffle, refreshments. Info: **Rick Lee,** 410-287-0415.

### Saturday, January 31

☆ **Cecil**. Winter Season at Fair Hill. Meet 8 AM Fair Hill Nature Center (covered bridge parking area, fee required) for half-day. Leader: **Richard Donham,** 610-932-0634.

### Sunday, February 1

MIDWINTER COUNT (Frederick County). **Frederick**. Call **David Smith,** 410-549-7082, to sign up. Tally Rally at Dave and Carol's house.

### Tuesday, February 3

MEETING. **Baltimore**. 7:30 PM Tuesday Evening Talk Show-n-Tell Night for members and friends of BBC. Bring your beautiful, interesting or unusual slides of local or international birds. Wear a bird T shirt or sweat shirt and possibly win a prize.

### Wednesday, February 4

☆ **Baltimore**. 9:30 AM-Noon. First Wednesdays at Fort McHenry. Monthly visit to assist in survey of bird activity. Cancelled in bad weather (high wind, fog, rain, snow). Leader: **Jim Peters,** 410-429-0966.

MEETING. **Carroll**. ***Mike Dixon*** from Purple Martin Association will present program on these beautiful birds. 7:30 PM at Senior Citizens Center, 125 Stoner Ave, Westminster. For info call **Laura Tarbell,** 410-857-1109.

### Thursday, February 5

MEETING. **Frederick**. ***Dr. Robert Trever*** will present discussion of "Chile: From the World's Driest Desert to the Uttermost Part of the Earth." Meet C. Burr Artz Library in downtown Frederick 7 PM. Contact **Marcia Balestri,** 301-473-5098 or mebalestri@erols.com

### Friday, February 6

MEETING. **Anne Arundel**. 8 PM at DNR Conference Room, Tawes Bldg, Annapolis. ***Gerald Winegrad:*** "Seabirds Imperiled by Longline Hooks." Hosts: **Sarah Bell & Larry Zoller.**

### Saturday, February 7

☆ **Patuxent**. Fran Uhler Natural Area, a Bowie hotspot for winter birds. Walk starts 7:30 AM. Park located at end of Lemons Bridge Road, off MD 197, north of Bowie. Call **Fred Fallon,** 301-262-1518, for add'l info.

☆ **Harford.** Bradenbaugh Flats. Join Bradenbaugh native **Dennis Kirkwood** to bird the bustling hedgerows and large open fields of this winter birding wonderland. Ring-necked Duck, Horned Lark, and White-crowned and Savannah Sparrows are regulars,

but American Pipit, Snow Bunting, and Lapland Longspur are distinct possibilities. Meet at Jarrettsville Elementary School at 8:30 AM. Contact Dennis at dkirkw@bellatlantic.net for more information.

☆ **Baltimore**. 9 AM. Winter Waterfowl at Marshy Point, one of Baltimore County's newer nature centers, for duck, geese, swans. Half-mile trail leads to point overlooking Dundee Creek. Boots advisable. Telescopes useful. Directions: Exit Beltway I-695 at Rte 702 south. Second exit onto Chase/Eastern Blvd. Go 6 miles. Turn right at sign for Dundee & Saltpeter Creek Park. Go 1/4 mile to dead end. Call to confirm. Leader: **Bob Rineer,** 410-391-8499.

☆ **Baltimore**. 9 AM-3 PM. Draw-In at Cylburn, at bird museum and nature museum. For artists of all levels, ages 10 and up. Bring art supplies. See, explore, be inspired, then illustrate items from many collection items not usually on display. Artists and naturalists on hand for instruction. Fee. Co-hosted by Cylburn Arboretum Association. For more info call 410-367-2217.

MIDWINTER COUNT. **Cecil**. Compiler: **Sean McCandless,** 410-392-3407. Details TBA.

MIDWINTER COUNT AND TALLY. **Howard**. To participate in the count, contact **Mary Jo Betts,** 301-596-5859, or **Jo Solem,** 301-725-5037. For the potluck tally, RSVP to **Don and Martha Waugh,** 410-381-8841, by Feb 4.

### Thursday, February 12

MEETING. **Howard.** "The Usual Suspects: An Unusual Display of Central Maryland Birds," by ***Greg Futral***. Greg's photos are from Conowingo, Hart-Miller Island, Aberdeen Proving Ground, and other familiar local areas. Longfellow Elementary School, Columbia. Hospitality and club bookstore 7:30 PM, meeting/program 8 PM. For more info call **Kurt Schwarz,** 410-461-1643.

### Friday–Monday, Feb. 13–16

☆ **Montgomery**. President's Day Weekend, Delmarva Peninsula: Wilmington, DE to Chesapeake Bay Bridge/Tunnel. 4 days. Joint trip with ANS. Winter waterfowl, songbirds, possible white-winged gulls, eiders, Harlequin Ducks, Great Cormorants. Call leader for further details and check late 2002/early 2003 ANS Naturalist News for more info. Reservations required. Leader: **Paul DuMont,** 703-931-8994.

### Saturday–Monday, Feb. 14–16

☆ **Frederick**. President's Day Weekend trip to Eastern Shore. Call **Mike Welch,** 301-874-5828 to reserve a spot.

☆ **Carroll**. President's Day Weekend at the Beach. Partial or entire weekend of good birding, good fun and good company. Meet 10 AM at Visitor Center, Bombay Hook NWR, DE. Limited accommodations. RSVP to **Bob Ringler,** 410-549-6031.

☆ **Anne Arundel**. Annual Winter Birding Weekend, Chincoteague and other shore locations. Reservations by Feb. 8. Leader: **Larry Zoller,** 410-987-9354.

### Saturday, February 14

☆ **Baltimore**. 7 AM Cape Henlopen to Ocean City. Trip to Delaware coast and Ocean City in search of scoters, Oldsquaw, Brant, Purple Sandpipers, Red-throated Loons, and Gannets. Eiders and Harlequin Ducks possible. Telescopes very useful. Meals bought on the road. Optional meeting place: Cape May-Lewes Ferry parking lot (DE) 10 AM. Leader: **Pete Webb,** 410-486-1217, pwebb@bcpl.net

☆ **Tri-County**. Nanticoke River. Start your Wicomico Year List with trip to county hot spots for gulls and other winter birds. For info contact **Sam Dyke,** 410-742-5497. Meet Asbury Methodist Church (north parking lot), Salisbury, 7:30 AM. Bring lunch/snack/drink.

☆ **Cecil**. "Hardcore Owling." Meet **4 AM** Big Elk Mall Dunkin' Donuts parking area. Owl "until we drop." Leader: **Sean McCandless,** 410-392-3407.

☆ **Patuxent**. Broad Creek Marsh. Explore this marsh along the Potomac for winter waterfowl. Meet Bowie P&R 7:30 AM. Park located at end of Lemons Bridge Road, off MD 197, north of Bowie. Call **Fred Shaffer,** 410-721-1744, for add'l info.

*(MOS Calendar continues on page 14)*

## WORLD SERIES OF BIRDING

This year MOS will be represented at the World Series of Birding in Cape May, NJ, by the Holy Order of Loggerhead Shrikes, a team that has been sponsored by the Montgomery Bird Club for the past five years. Captained by Don Simonson, the Shrikes have raised more than $10,000 for Pronatura Veracruz in Mexico. This year they will continue to raise funds for Pronatura as well as for the traditional beneficiary of the MOS state team, the Atlas project. Don is confident the team will meet or exceed their previous 150 species.

Log onto **www.holyshrikes.com** and pledge.

**MOS Calendar** *(continued from page 13)*

☆ **Harford.** Black Marsh to Marshy Point. **Jean and Larry Fry** lead this trip to one of the finest tidal marshes in the Upper Bay region. Great variety of habitats offers access to full gamut of winter birds. Dress warmly, bring lunch. Meet at 7 AM at MD 152 and I-95 Park & Ride. Contact FFryjl@aol.com for details.

### Tuesday, February 17

MEETING. **Allegany**. "Two Years of Bio-Blitz" by ***Eric Savage.*** Meet at Board of Education Building, 108 Washington Street, Cumberland. Contact **Barbara Gaffney** at 301-895-4646 for more info.

### Wednesday, February 18

MEETING. **Montgomery.** "Birding in South Africa," by ***Gail Mackiernan.*** 7:30 PM. Potomac Presbyterian Church, 10301 River Rd, Potomac.

### Thursday, February 19

MEETING. **Caroline**. "Seabirds of the Maritime Provinces of Canada," by ***Dr. Robert Trever.*** 7:30 PM. Caroline County Public Library, 100 Market St., Denton.

### Saturday, February 21

☆ **Frederick**. Owl Prowl. Format is changed: everyone will survey his/her own Breeding Bird Atlas Territory for owls. You can go Friday night or wee hours of Saturday morning, depending on your druthers. Don't have a territory? Call **Marcia Balestri,** 301-473-5098, and she will put you with someone who needs help (although you should really call Dave and get a block!!) We will gather for breakfast 7 AM Saturday to compare notes.

☆ **Baltimore**. 8:00 AM-Noon. Saturday Walks at Fort McHenry. Cancelled if raining. Leader: **Jim Peters**, 410-429-0966.

☆ **Harford.** Maryland and Delaware shore. A perennial favorite, this full-day adventure visits some of Delmarva's birding mega-hotspots in search of winter waifs and northern strays. Target birds include eiders, Harlequin Duck, Purple Sandpiper, Snowy Owl, and Brown-headed Nuthatch. Bring lunch and warm, comfortable clothing. Meet at MD 155 and I-95 Park & Ride at 6:30 AM. Contact leader **Les Eastman** at les@birdtreks.com for more information.

### Sunday, February 22

☆ **Montgomery**. Black Hill Regional Park. Half day. Waterfowl and land birds. Meet Visitor Center 8 AM. Bring scope and snacks. Reservations not required. Leader: **Rob Gibbs**, 301-253-6903.

### Monday, February 23

MEETING. **Tri-County.** Program TBA. 7 PM Asbury Methodist Church (Fox Room, south entrance), Salisbury.

### Tuesday, February 24

MEETING. **Washington**. Pot Luck Dinner. Meet Mt. Aetna Camp & Retreat Center 6 PM for dinner, 7:30 meeting: ***Kevin Dodge*** will present "Night Sounds." Bring own plates, etc, and a dish to share. Call **Anna Hutzell**, 301-797-8454, for further info.

### Thursday, February 26

☆ **Washington**. Winter Bird Trip by car. Meet 9:30 AM Rte 65 Park & Ride below MVA. Leaders **Judy Lilga,** 301-432-2276, and **Bob Keedy,** 301-733-7708.

*Brown-headed Nuthatch*

### Saturday, February 28

☆ **Frederick**. Timberdoodles at Audrey Carroll. **Doug Parker** and **Wilbur Hershberger** will lead us on search for American Woodcocks. Last year we had excellent looks at them displaying and on the ground feeding. Meet at Park & Ride, Rte 75 just south of I-70 at 5:30 PM. Bring flashlight. For info call Doug, 301-663-1909.

☆ **Baltimore**. 7 AM Patuxent River Naval Air Station. Southern Maryland reservation-only trip for winter delights. Guaranteed to get lots of Horned Larks, Savannah Sparrows, variety of waterfowl. Snow Bunting likely, Common Snipe, Lapland Longspur, or Short-eared Owl possible. Limit 12. Leader: **Jim Swift**. Contact coordinator **Pete Webb,** 410-486-1217, pwebb@bcpl.net, to reserve space on this special trip. Snow date: March 13.

☆ **Carroll**. Bird Walk at Piney Run Park for wintering waterfowl. Meet 8 AM at park gate on Martz Rd, Sykesville. For info contact **Tammy Schwaab,** 410-857-4913.

☆ indicates **Field Trips**

☆ **Anne Arundel**. Salisbury, Ward Brothers Museum. Meet 8 AM at Bay 50 Shopping Ctr. Leader: **Pat Tate,** 410-266-6043.

### Sunday, February 29

☆ **Howard.** Birds of Winter at Bon Secours. 9 AM, 1.5 hours. Meet at visitor's parking lot. Easy walking on the grounds of this lovely spiritual center. Look for sounds and sights of the season. Mature woodlands, fields and field edges host an assortment of our resident winter species. Open sky for flyovers. Facilities available. Leaders: **Michele Wright,** 410-465-6057, and **Eva Sunell,** 410-995-0029.

### Tuesday, March 2

MEETING. **Baltimore**. 7:30 PM. Tuesday Evenings at Sherwood. "The Brown-headed Cowbird, a Conservation Challenge" by ***David Curson.***

### Wednesday, March 3

☆ **Baltimore**. 9:30 AM-12:00 noon. First Wednesdays at Fort McHenry. Monthly visit to assist in survey of bird activity. Cancelled in bad weather (high wind, fog, rain, snow). Leader: **Jim Peters,** 410-429-0966.

### Thursday, March 4

☆ **Baltimore**. 2 to 3 PM. Birds in Art at Walters Art Museum. 600 N. Charles Street, Baltimore. Tour the Walters to explore history and symbolism of birds in art—in the Ancient World, Medieval, and Asian art galleries. Free admission. Meet Visitor Services Desk, Centre Street entrance. Parking lot at Cathedral & Centre Streets, or limited street parking. Contact leader to confirm: **Paula Warner,** 410-539-1611, WarnerPLW@aol.com

MEETING. **Frederick**. ***Bob Ringler*** will present video program on "Colorado Chicken Trek," a trip he did last year to see prairie-chickens, rosy finches, and other Colorado specialties. Meet C. Burr Artz Library downtown Frederick 7 PM. Contact **Marcia Balestri,** 301-473-5098, mebalestri@erols.com

MEETING. **Anne Arundel**. Annual Wildlife Lecture by ***Richard E. Heisse, Jr.*** 8 PM at Quiet Waters Park. Details in Feb. newsletter.

### Friday, March 5

MEETING. **Harford.** Photographer and birder ***Bob Mumford*** will present "Timeless Patterns: The Seasons at Churchill." Dinner at 6:15 at Churchville Presbyterian Church, MD 22 and MD 136, followed by meeting at 7 PM. For more info and/or dinner reservations, call **Jean Wheeler**, 410-879-7424.

### Saturday, March 6

☆ **Frederick**. Black Hill Regional Park for waterfowl, late winter birds, early spring migrants. Meet Urbana Park & Ride South Lot 7:30 AM. Call **Gary Smyle,** 301-663-0055, for info.

☆ **Baltimore**. 8 AM Cromwell Valley Park. Diverse habitat includes stream, woods and fields. Expect to see variety of resident and wintering birds. Leader: **Keith Eric Costley**, 410-521-5366, oriolekec1@aol.com

☆ **Cecil**. Cecil County Waterfowl. Meet 8 AM North East Plaza Acme parking area for half-day. Leader: **Chris Starling,** 410-287-4223.

☆ **Howard.** Lark and Pipit Search on Underwood Road. 8 AM, 3 hours. Meet at 32/70 Park & Ride. We will walk country roads in search of pipits and larks. It's always possible a rarity may be among them. Great view of the sky for flyovers. Scopes useful. No facilities. Leader: **Ralph Cullison,** 410-442-2181.

☆ **Montgomery.** Jug Bay. Half day. Joint trip with ANS. Possible Rusty Blackbirds, migrating Wilson's Snipe, and courtship display of Osprey. Meet at 8 AM. Check ANS newsletter for more info. Reservations required. For details and driving instructions, call Leader: **John Bjerke,** 301-963-8525.

☆ **Harford.** Swan Harbor. This recently acquired park on the Oakington Peninsula offers 469 acres of bayside rolling farmland, undeveloped woodland, and brushy meadows. Meet at park headquarters at end of entrance road at 8 AM. Contact leader **Lynn Davis** at lynnd@iximd.com for more details.

### Sunday, March 7

☆ **Anne Arundel**. Wooten's Landing for woodcocks. Meet **4:30 AM** for half day. Leader: **Kathie Lambert,** 410-867-4056.

☆ **Baltimore**. 8 AM Loch Raven. Waterfowl and land birds. Possible Bald Eagles and Bluebirds. Telescopes useful. Two-mile level walk. Beginning birders welcome. Directions: From Baltimore Beltway exit 27 north, take Dulaney Valley Road north several miles, cross large bridge over reservoir and bear right immediately. Continue to first left, Stone Hill Road. Go up about 100 yards, turn around, then park on right. All cars need to be on same side. Leader: **Debbie Terry**, 410-252-8771, gt5s@bcpl.net. Snow date: Sunday March 14.

## BOOK REVIEW

**Birding on Borrowed Time, by Phoebe Snetsinger.**

*Foreword by Peter Kaestner and Illustrations by H. Douglas Pratt. American Birding Association, 2003.*

The American Birding Association launched its new book-publishing program in 2003 with this "autobiography"—actually assembled after Phoebe Snetsinger's death, using her extensive notes and with much input from her surviving children.

This is a compelling and challenging book for the active birder, as it not only marvelously conjures the thrill of the chase for each new bird but also raises worrying questions as to whether any human being should be so single-minded and compulsive in the pursuit of birds or so concomitantly indifferent to the other members of her immediate family.

Phoebe Snetsinger was an ordinary house-bound woman with a busy husband, four growing children, and no interest in birds whatsoever, until being captivated by a Blackburnian Warbler at the age of 34. Thereafter she became more and more involved with "birding" (as we know it today) in the St. Louis area, and developed a national reputation as an excellent field birder. When not yet 50, she was diagnosed with a malignant melanoma and given less than a year to live. This shattering event propelled her into a virtual whirlwind of birding tours to all parts of the world. Ironically, she lived on in generally good health for almost another 20 years, albeit at intervals having to undergo surgery and listen to more dire predictions, only to die in a vehicle accident in Madagascar while on (what else?) a birding trip. She died instantly and probably painlessly.

Snetsinger was the first person in the world to identify 8,000 bird species, an achievement in which she took great pride. Yet she was no mere "lister," giving over weeks or months to the study of books and skins before each of her trips, and making extensive notes about every bird she ever saw. Her library of 3 x 5 cards was legendary. Professional birding tour leaders have told me that she was the most well prepared participant they had ever guided.

Here is a person whose peripatetic style almost cost her her marriage, who missed her daughter's wedding in favor of a birding trip to Colombia, who was brutally assaulted and raped while in the field in New Guinea, who suffered numerous other lesser vicissitudes including shipwreck, earthquakes, and broken bones, yet who never quit and just kept on birding.

The reader doesn't really know whether merely to admire this woman or maybe to pity her just a bit as well.

Read this book. You will enjoy it and marvel at its central character's commitment, zeal, and perhaps a touch of craziness. Is too much birding too much of a good thing?

*—Michael Bowen, Montgomery Bird Club*

## LAST CALL

…for entries in the **Pin Design Contest,** deadline January 16. The design must depict a bird appropriate for Chestertown, the Conference site, and incorporate the phrases "MOS" and "2004."

For more info, check the website (www.mdbirds.org/members/contest.html) or contact John Malcolm at smudgie@comcast.net or 301-977-5788.

…for **Annual Bird List Submissions**, deadline January 20. Check the Nov/Dec issue for a reporting form and mail it to Norm Saunders, 1261 Cavendish Drive, Colesville, MD 20905-7030.

…for **Scholarship Applications,** deadline January 31. Persons who work with young people, such as teachers or park rangers, are eligible to compete for awards to summer Audubon camps. Check the website (go to "activities," then "scholarships," or contact Jean Fry, ffryjl@aol.com or 410-452-8539.

*MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.*
*Cylburn Mansion*
*4915 Greenspring Avenue*
*Baltimore, MD 21290-4698*

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
at Hagerstown, MD
Permit No. 184

**POSTMASTER: TIME-DATED MATERIAL—PLEASE EXPEDITE!**